Muscovy and the Mongols

Cross-cultural influences on the steppe frontier, 1304–1589

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Introduction: understanding Muscovy

Scholars have expressed remarkably diverse opinions on the origins and development of Muscovy. It is fair to say that no consensus exists on the formation of Muscovite institutions, and by extension the development of Muscovite political culture.[1] Nor does it appear likely that there will be a consensus in the near future.

In studying Muscovy, one confronts, in addition to the wide-ranging and often diametrically opposed interpretations of historians, a scarcity of primary source material and often contradictory information in those sources that do exist. If all or most of the interpretations about Muscovy can be supported by evidence, then the diametrically opposed views must result from giving different weight to that evidence, that is, of emphasizing some aspects and dismissing other aspects of the testimony of the primary sources. Therefore, unless we are prepared to continue to deny categorically the contributions of all but a narrow range of studies and evidence that agrees with our own view, we would be well advised to formulate a framework for the study of Muscovite history to cope both with the source problem and with the historiographic problem. By establishing the delimiters of the historiographic tradition, we might better be able to understand that problem, and, thereby, the source problem as well. The following section is not intended to be an exhaustive survey, but one that only characterizes the positions of the different interpretive camps.

I

At one extreme in the historiography are those who believe Muscovite institutions are indigenously "Russian," that in part they were continua-

[1] By "political culture" I mean the totality of institutions, attitudes, concepts, and practices connected with the running of a polity. In Muscovy, we have some information about institutions and practices and we have Church writings concerning ideology, but we have to extrapolate from these the attitudes that were operative at any particular time. For a discussion of the concept "political culture," see Keith Michael Baker, "Introduction," in *The French Revolution and the Creation of Modern Political Culture*, 4

tions of Kievan institutions and that in part they were created to meet uniquely Muscovite needs. This interpretation does not admit that "outside" influences, especially that of the Mongols, had any impact. S. M. Solov'ev represented this point of view when he wrote: "we have no reason to assume any great influence [of the Mongols] on [Russia's] internal administration as we do not see any traces of it."[2] S. F. Platonov carried this argument further:

> And how could the Tatar influence on Rus' life be considerable when the Tatars lived far off, did not mix with the Rus', and appeared in Russia only to gather tribute or as an army, brought in for the most part by Rus' princes for the princes' own purposes? . . . Therefore, we can proceed to consider the internal life of Rus' society in the thirteenth century without paying attention to the fact of the Tatar yoke.[3]

Both Solov'ev and Platonov were referring specifically to the thirteenth century, but this principle holds for later centuries in their work as well. B. D. Grekov and A. Iu. Iakubovskii also categorically denied any direct influence of the Mongols on Muscovy, but they did see an indirect result: "The Russian state with Moscow at its head was created not with the assistance of the Tatars but in the process of a hard struggle of the Russian people against the yoke of the Golden Horde."[4] We can compare this view with N. M. Karamzin's statement about the Mongol invasion that "the calamity was a blessing in disguise, for the destruction contained the boon of unity . . . Another hundred years of princely feuds. What would have been the result . . . Moscow, in fact, owes its greatness to the khans."[5] The proponents of this interpretation credited the positive result of this struggle to the Russian people. Nicholas Riasanovsky, in his widely used textbook, expressed a negative variant of this interpretation:

> It is tempting, thus, to return to the older view and to consider the Mongols as of little significance in Russian history. On the other hand, their destructive impact deserves attention. And they, no doubt, contributed something to the general harshness of the age and to the burdensome and exacting nature of the centralizing Muscovite state which emerged out of this painful background.[6]

vols., ed. Keith Michael Baker and Colin Lucas, Oxford, Pergamon, 1987–1991, vol. 1: *The Political Culture of the Old Regime*, pp. xi–xiii.

[2] S. M. Solov'ev, *Istoriia Rossii s drevneishikh vremen*, 15 vols., Moscow, Sotsialnaia-ekonomicheskaia literatura, 1960–1966, vol. 2, p. 489.

[3] S. F. Platonov, *Lektsii po russkoi istorii*, 3 vols., St. Petersburg, Stolichnaia staropechatnia, 1899, vol. 1, p. 85.

[4] B. D. Grekov and A. Iu. Iakubovskii, *Zolotaia Orda i ee padenie*, Moscow and Leningrad, Akademiia nauk SSSR, 1950, p. 256.

[5] N. M. Karamzin, *Istoriia gosudarstva rossiiskogo*, 5th edn., 12 vols., St. Petersburg, Eduard Prats, 1842–1843, vol. 5, p. 223.

[6] Nicholas Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, 4th edn., New York, Oxford University Press, 1984, p. 76.

V. I. Koretskii reiterated this negative assessment of the Mongol impact on Russian development: "The Mongol Yoke and its effects were among the main reasons why Russia became a backward country in comparison with several of the countries of western Europe."[7] The strength of this interpretation is indicated by the fact that it appears even in the work of Eurasian historians, like George Vernadsky, who have done as much as anyone to define positive aspects of Mongol influence on Muscovy. At one point in his volume on the Mongols, Vernadsky wrote: "inner Russian political life was never stifled but only curbed and deformed by Mongol rule."[8] In a variant of this interpretation, the impact of the Mongols is seen not only as destructive of Russian society and political culture but also as detrimental to the development of the Russians themselves. The military historian Christopher Duffy summed up such views this way:

> The princes of Muscovy became the most enthusiastic and shameless of the Mongol surrogates and much that was distinctive and unattractive about the Russian character and Russian institutions has been attributed to this experience. Mongol influence has been held variously responsible for the destruction of the urban classes, the brutalisation of the peasantry, a denial of human dignity, and a distorted sense of values which reserved a special admiration for ferocity, tyrannical ways and slyness.[9]

[7] V. I. Koretskii, "Mongol Yoke in Russia," in *Modern Encyclopedia of Russian and Soviet History (MERSH)*, ed. Joseph L. Wieczynski, Gulf Breeze, FL, Academic International Press, 54 vols., 1976–1990, vol. 23, p. 47. For a survey of the Soviet historiographical denial of any positive influence from the Mongols, see Charles J. Halperin, "Soviet Historiography on Russia and the Mongols," *Russian Review*, vol. 41, 1982, pp. 306–322.

[8] George Vernadsky, *A History of Russia*, 5 vols., New Haven, CT, Yale University Press, 1943–1969, vol. 3, *The Mongols and Russia*, p. 344.

[9] Christopher Duffy, *Russia's Military Way to the West: Origins and Nature of Russian Military Power 1700–1800*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981, p. 2. The Russians are not the only ones who have been seen as victims of such influence. Recently, John Keegan blamed Mongol influence for the ruthless ferocity of the Spanish *Reconquista* against Islam and for the massacres by the Spanish conquistadores of the Aztecs and Incas. Keegan reasoned that the Mongols brought ruthless ferocity to the Muslims, who in turn introduced it to the Crusaders, who in turn brought it back with them when they returned from the Holy Land, so that it eventually found its way into Spain: "it is not fanciful to suggest that the awful fate of the Incas and Aztecs . . . at the hand of the Spanish conquistadors ultimately harked back to Genghis himself." John Keegan, *A History of Warfare*, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1994, p. 214. Not only is it "fanciful," but Keegan's construct is one of the most fanciful I have ever come across in historical study. Ruthless ferocity is one characteristic that individuals within ethnic groups seem quite capable of developing on their own without foreign borrowing or imposition. But if anyone introduced ruthless ferocity to anyone, it is more likely the Crusaders who introduced it to the Muslims rather than vice versa. Contemporary Islamic accounts treat the Crusaders as barbarians not only because of their low cultural attainments but also because of their savage behavior. See Francesco Gabrieli, *Arab Historians of the Crusades*, trans. E. J. Costello, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969. Eyewitness Christian accounts tend to confirm the Islamic assessment. See, e.g., Raymond of

And the historian and journalist Harrison Salisbury commented in 1969: "It is current history. Russia still struggles against the legacy of backwardness, ignorance, servility, submissiveness, deceit, cruelty, oppression, and lies imposed by the terrible Mongols."[10] Since these historians rarely cite evidence to support their accusations of nefarious Mongol influence, one begins to suspect we are encountering here their own anti-Mongol biases.

It has been somewhat easier to argue that the Mongols had little or no impact than to argue the same for Byzantium. Yet, Edward L. Keenan, who in general accepts the idea that there were outside influences on Muscovy, has categorically denied any specific influence of Byzantium on Muscovite political culture: "To seek evidence of influential links between modern Russia or even Muscovite political culture and that of Kiev or Byzantium is, in my view, futile."[11] Keenan went on to write:

> It cannot be demonstrated, for example, that during its formative period (i.e., 1450–1500) Muscovite political culture was significantly influenced either by the form or by the practice of Byzantine political culture or ideology. Nor is there convincing evidence that any powerful Muscovite politician or political group was conversant with Byzantine political culture, except perhaps as the latter was reflected in the ritual and organization of the Orthodox Church, which itself had little practical political importance in early Muscovy and little *formative* impact upon Russian political behavior.[12]

Other scholars have asserted that the overall impact of the Church has been a negative one. Francis Thomson is perhaps the most vociferous of present-day scholars who see a stultifying impact of the Church: "It was not the Mongols who were responsible for Russia's intellectual isolation . . . it was the Church."[13] This view echoes that of Russian liberals of

Aguilers' description of the massacre of Muslims and Jews when the Crusaders took Jerusalem in 1099. Raymond D'Aguilers, *Historia Francorum qui ceperunt Jerusalem* in *Recueil des historiens des Croisades. Historiens occidentaux*, 5 vols., Paris, Imprimerie Royale, 1844–1895, vol. 3, p. 300. According to Runciman, "it was this bloodthirsty proof of Christian fanaticism that recreated the fanaticism of Islam." Steven Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, 3 vols., Cambridge University Press, 1951, vol. 1, p. 287. In a remarkable display of historical oversight, Keegan glosses over this and other outrageous atrocities committed by the Crusaders against Muslims and Jews long before Chingiz Khan was even born. Keegan, *History*, pp. 291–292.

[10] Harrison E. Salisbury, *War Between Russia and China*, New York, W. W. Norton, 1969, p. 31.

[11] Edward L. Keenan, "Muscovite Political Folkways," *Russian Review*, vol. 45, 1986, p. 118.

[12] Keenan, "Muscovite Political Folkways," p. 118.

[13] Francis J. Thomson, "The Nature of the Reception of Christian Byzantine Culture in Russia in the Tenth to Thirteenth Centuries and Its Implications for Russian Culture," *Slavica Gandensia*, vol. 5, 1978, p. 120.

the early twentieth century, like Paul Miliukov,[14] and the writings of Richard Pipes to the effect that the Church had squandered its ideals, sold out to the state in return for being allowed to keep its wealth, and that "[t]he ultimate result of the policies of the Russian Orthodox Church was not only to discredit it in the eyes of those who cared for social and political justice, but to create a spiritual vacuum."[15] The next step in the historiography was to combine the two negative attitudes, the anti-Mongol and the anti-Church, as Cyril Toumanoff did: "The Mongol temporal 'Iron Curtain' completed the Byzantine spiritual one."[16]

The indigenous-origin interpretation is an inherently Manichaean one. If the proponents of this model allow for any outside influence, that influence is, by definition, negative or destructive. Everything that is positive and constructive comes from within Muscovy; everything that is negative and destructive comes from without. In this interpretation, social and administrative structures seem to spring up like mushrooms after a rain, then disappear just as suddenly. They rise and fall, without any apparent rationale. Furthermore, we then have difficulty in making structural comparisons of Muscovite society with other traditional societies in order to gain insights, because Muscovy is presented as being totally different from any other society.

Numerous examples exist in the historiography to show that concentration on the indigenous-origin model and the concomitant refusal to look outside Muscovy for possible influence can lead scholars to faulty interpretations. One small example and one large example should be sufficient to illustrate this point. First, the small example: grand-princely seals of the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries depict a beardless man in a tunic on horseback slaying a dragon by means of a spear.[17] Some scholars, after pointing out that there is no halo, have asserted that the

[14] See Paul Miliukov, "The Religious Tradition," in *Russia and Its Crisis*, University of Chicago Press, 1906, pp. 65–130.

[15] Richard Pipes, *Russia Under the Old Regime*, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1974, p. 245; see also *ibid.*, pp. 233–234.

[16] Cyril Toumanoff, "Moscow the Third Rome: Genesis and Significance of a Politico-Religious Idea," *Catholic Historical Review*, vol. 40, 1954/55, p. 433. The appeal of this notion of a dual Byzantine- and Mongol-induced isolation of Russia can be seen in the fact that it has been used by some textbook writers, along with Russia's geographical distance from western Europe, to explain the limited European influence during this period. See, e.g., Anthony Esler, *The Human Venture: a World History from Prehistory to the Present*, 2nd edn., Englewood Cliffs, NJ, Prentice Hall, 1992, p. 449.

[17] *Snimki drevnikh russkikh pechatei*, 2 vols., Moscow, Komissiia pechataniia gosudarstvennykh gramot i dogorov, 1880, vol. 1, seals nos. 1–7, and 9. These seals date from the reigns of Ivan III, Vasilii III, and Ivan IV. This same figure appears on Muscovite coins of the period. From the spear (*kop'e*) that the horseman is carrying we obtain the term "kopeck" (*kopeika*).

figure is a "tsar on horseback," most likely a representation of the grand prince himself.[18] Yet, as early as 1880, Baron Théodore de Bühler had discussed the improbability of the grand prince's being represented as a half-dressed and beardless youth. Instead, Bühler identified the figure with St. George the Dragonslayer in Byzantine icons.[19] More recently, Robert Croskey pointed out that saints in Byzantine icons were not always shown with halos and that a halo around the head of the rider would have interrupted the inscription on the seal.[20] It is clear that the representation cannot be that of the tsar or grand prince of Muscovy and must be that of St. George in Byzantine icons. Gustave Alef recognized the similarity between the representation of this figure on the seal and that of St. George in a Novgorod icon of the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century.[21] And when we recall that St. George was the name saint of Iurii Dolgorukii, traditionally regarded as the founder of Moscow, and that Iurii built churches dedicated to St. George in Vladimir and Iuriev-Polskii in 1152,[22] it becomes abundantly clear that an attempt to disregard the Byzantine antecedents of Muscovite culture has led some scholars to propose and defend an untenable position.

Now, the large example: a number of historians have been trying for some time to find linkages between Judaism and the Novgorod–Moscow heresy of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Yet, all such attempts have failed.[23] The reason these historians are seeking such

[18] E. I. Kamentseva and N. V. Ustiugov, *Russkaia sfragistika i geral'dika*, Moscow, Vysshaia shkola, 1963, pp. 111–113; G. V. Vilinbakhov, "Vsadnik russkogo gerba," *Trudy Gosudarstvennogo Ermitazha*, vol. 21, *Numismatika*, vol. 5, 1981, pp. 117–122.

[19] Fedor Biuler [Baron Théodore de Bühler], "Predislovie," *Snimki drevnikh russkikh pechatei*, vol. 1, p. XVII.

[20] See Robert M. Croskey, *Muscovite Diplomatic Practice in the Reign of Ivan III*, New York, Garland, 1987, pp. 202–204.

[21] Gustave Alef, "The Adoption of the Muscovite Two-Headed Eagle: a Discordant View," *Speculum*, vol. 41, 1966, p. 1; repr. in Gustave Alef, *Rulers and Nobles in Fifteenth-Century Muscovy*, London, Variorum, 1983, item 9. Cf. *Istoriia russkogo iskusstva*, 13 vols., Moscow, Nauka, 1954–1964, vol. 2, illustration facing p. 220 (see also pp. 133 and 235). Cf. Konrad Onasch, *Ikonen*, Berlin, Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1961, plates 67 and 126.

[22] For his building the church in Vladimir, see *Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisei* (*PSRL*), 40 vols., St. Petersburg/Petrograd/Leningrad and Moscow, Arkheograficheskaia komissiia, Nauka, and Arkheograficheskii tsentr, 1843–1995, vol. 4, p. 8; vol. 7, p. 57; vol. 9, pp. 196–197; and vol. 24, p. 77. For his building the church in Iuriev-Polskii, see *PSRL*, vol. 4, p. 8; vol. 9, p. 196; vol. 15, pt. 2, cols. 219–220; and vol. 28, pp. 32, 187. For a detailed discussion of the church itself, see N. N. Voronin, *Zodchestva severo-vostochnoi Rusi XII–XV vekov*, 2 vols., Moscow, Akademiia nauk SSSR, 1962, vol. 2, pp. 68–107. The Compilation of the End of the Fifteenth Centry states that he built a church in Suzdal' dedicated to St. George also in 1152. *PSRL*, vol. 25, p. 56. But this entry may be a mistake on the part of the scribe. See also Voronin, *Zodchestva severo-vostochnoi Rusi*, vol. 1, pp. 91–100.

[23] See Ia. S. Lur'e [Jakov S. Luria], "Unresolved Issues in the History of the Ideological Movements of the Late Fifteenth Century," in *Medieval Russian Culture*, ed. Henrik

connections is the reference by Archbishop Gennadii and later Church writers to the heretics as Judaizers. But referring to heretics generically as "Jews" and "Judaizers" was commonplace among Byzantine Church writers, even if there was no Jewish influence.[24] It was most likely through the works of John of Damascus that the Byzantine theory of all heresies deriving ultimately from either Judaism or paganism reached Rus'.[25] Not understanding this usage has led many scholars on a wild goose chase to demonstrate a connection between the Novgorod–Moscow heretics and some Hebrew texts that had recently been translated into Ruthenian.

Proponents of the indigenous model have little difficulty in saying they see no influence even when the evidence is overwhelmingly in favor of the influence. A. N. Kirpichnikov, for example, denied any influence of the Mongol army on the Muscovite army.[26] Yet, the Mongol army was the mightiest war machine of its time. To argue that Muscovite military leaders did not borrow from the superior strategies, tactics, and weaponry of the Mongols makes the Muscovites appear not only ignorant but obstinate. Likewise, to argue that Muscovite leaders did not borrow administrative techniques of the largest and most efficiently run empire of the time tends to denigrate their abilities (as though they were incapable of doing so). In short, it is too facile for historians to deny outside influence on Muscovy as long as they continue to succumb to their own mindsets rather than test their beliefs against the evidence.

Likewise, failure to integrate Muscovite history into world history risks keeping the Muscovite field arcane and obsolete. If we maintain Muscovy as completely *sui generis*, then we certainly have a history, but one that no one will be interested in except as a quaint curiosity. As a result, those who write integrative histories[27] will feel free to ignore Muscovy or continue to write the old shibboleths about it and its political culture.

At the other extreme in the historiography are those who believe

Birnbaum and Michael S. Flier, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1984, pp. 150–163.

[24] Steven B. Bowman, *The Jews of Byzantium, 1204–1453*, Birmingham, University of Alabama Press, 1985, pp. 29–30.

[25] Jana Howlett [Ia. R. Khoulett], "Svidetel'stvo arkhiepiskopa Gennadiia o eresi 'novgorodskikh eretikov zhidovskaia mudr"stvuiushchikh'," *Trudy Otdela drevnerusskoi literatury (TODRL)*, vol. 46, 1993, pp. 64–65.

[26] A. N. Kirpichnikov, "Fakty, gipotezy i zabluzhdeniia v izuchenii russkoi voennoi istorii XIII–XV vv.," *Drevneishie gosudarstva na territorii SSSR. Materialy i issledovaniia 1984 god*, Moscow, Nauka, 1985, pp. 233–234 fn. 18 and p. 238 fn. 31.

[27] Joseph Fletcher sketched an outline for such a history in his "Integrative History: Parallels and Interconnections in the Early Modern Period, 1500–1800," *Journal of Turkish Studies*, vol. 9, 1985, pp. 37–57.

Muscovite institutions are all imports. This interpretation tends to see Muscovy as being an imitation of other societies, in particular Byzantine, Mongol, or European. The image of Muscovy as a variant of Byzantine culture was expressed definitively by Dimitri Obolensky:

> the attempt to identify and describe the local "recensions" which Byzantine civilisation underwent in medieval Russia is, like the recognition of distinctive styles in art, a worthwhile undertaking, however tentative its outcome may be. In the last resort, however, these local variations may well prove, from the historian's viewpoint, to be less significant than the pattern of values, beliefs, and intellectual and aesthetic experience which, in common with other peoples of Eastern Europe, the Russians of the Middle Ages acquired from Byzantium.[28]

Other scholars also share this viewpoint. John Meyendorff wrote that "nothing in Russian medieval culture and society can be fully explained without reference to the Byzantine inheritance."[29] One of the earliest propagators of this line of interpretation was A. A. Kunik, who asked: "Is it not so, generally speaking, that the greater part of Russian history is the reflection of the history of Byzantium?"[30]

In contrast, the Eurasianists have adopted the Mongol model. Nicholas Trubetskoi, for example, asserted that "the Russian state . . . is the inheritor, the successor, the continuator of the historical work of Chingiz Khan."[31] And George Vernadsky has stated that Muscovy "in a sense, might be considered an offspring of the Mongol Empire."[32] While accepting the destructiveness of the initial Mongol invasions and negative aspects of Tatar hegemony, Vernadsky discussed a number of positive Mongol influences on administration and the army.[33] One of the most visible of those who have argued in favor of the Mongol model has been Karl Wittfogel, who wrote: "Tatar rule alone among the three major Oriental influences affecting Russia was decisive both in destroying the non-Oriental Kievan society and in laying the foundations

[28] Dimitri Obolensky, "The Relations Between Byzantium and Russia (Eleventh to Fifteenth Century)," *XIII International Congress of Historical Sciences. Moscow, August 16–23, 1970*, Moscow, Nauka, 1970, p. 12.

[29] John Meyendorff, "The Byzantine Impact on Russian Civilization," in *Windows on the Russian Past: Essays on Soviet Historiography Since Stalin*, ed. Samuel H. Baron and Nancy W. Heer, Columbus, OH, American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies, 1977, p. 45.

[30] A. A. Kunik, "Pochemu Vizantiia donyne ostaetsia zagadkoi vo vsemirnoi istorii?" *Uchenie zapiski Imp. Akademii nauk po pervomu i tret'emu otdeleniiam*, vol. 2, pt. 3, 1853, p. 441.

[31] Nicholas Trubetskoi [I. R.], *Nasledie Chingiskhana. Vzgliad na russkuiu istoriiu ne s Zapada, a s Vostka*, Berlin, Evraziiskoe izdatel'stvo, 1925, p. 9.

[32] George Vernadsky, "The Scope and Content of Chingis Khan's *Yasa*," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, vol. 3, 1938, p. 348.

[33] Vernadsky, *Mongols and Russia*, pp. 344–366.

for the despotic state of Muscovite and post-Muscovite Russia."[34] Likewise, Tibor Szamuely, in his reinterpretation of Russian history, wrote: "The Mongols bequeathed to Muscovy not only their conception of society and of the state, but also the system of government and administration that had served them so well, and that was so admirably fitted to the needs of a large, expanding and powerful state."[35] This model is clearly in conflict with other historiographic models that attribute Muscovite development either solely to indigenous causes or predominantly to Byzantine influence.

Some historians, however, have proposed a model that combines the Byzantine and Mongol influences. This model is what B. H. Sumner must have had in mind when he wrote: "In the make-up of tsarism the ideas and ritual traceable to Byzantine influence were fused with the hard fact and practice of the Tatar khans."[36] Michael Cherniavsky and Francis Dvornik explored this road further.[37] One of the first scholars, as far as I know, to have formulated this line of argument was Hedwig Fleischhacker.[38] She, in turn, may have been influenced by the ideas of the Eurasianists. Trubetskoi had formulated the core of the idea when he wrote that the Russians

> had to do away with what was unacceptable, what made it [the Tatar state idea] foreign and hostile. In other words, it had to be separated from its Mongolness and connected with Orthodoxy, so it could be declared as one's own, as Russian. In fulfilling this task, Russian national thought turned to Byzantine state ideas and traditions and in it found the material useful in the religious appropriation and Russification of the Mongolian state system. The ideas of Chinghiz Khan, obscured and eroded during the process of their implementation but still glimmering within the Mongolian state system, once again came to life, but in a completely new, unrecognizable form after they had received a Byzantine–Christian foundation.[39]

He suggested that it was because of the Tatar hegemony that "Byzantine state ideologies, which earlier did not have any particular

[34] Karl Wittfogel, *Oriental Despotism: a Comparative Study of Total Power*, New York, Vintage, 1981, p. 225.

[35] Tibor Szamuely, *The Russian Tradition*, London, Secker & Warburg, 1974, p. 20.

[36] B. H. Sumner, *A Short History of Russia*, New York, Harcourt, 1949, p. 82.

[37] Michael Cherniavsky, "Khan or Basileus: an Aspect of Russian Mediaeval Political Theory," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 20, 1959, pp. 459–476; reprinted in *The Structure of Russian History: Interpretive Essays*, ed. Michael Cherniavsky, New York, Random House, 1970, pp. 65–79. Cherniavsky, however, like the anti-Mongolists, seems to have equated Asiatic with barbaric, a bias that Dvornik did not exhibit. Francis Dvornik, *The Slavs in European History and Civilization*, New Brunswick, NJ, Rutgers University Press, 1962, pp. 378–380.

[38] Hedwig Fleischhacker, *Russland zwischen zwei Dynastien (1598–1613). Ein Untersuching über die Krise in der obersten Gewalt*, Vienna, Rudolf M. Rohrer, 1933, pp. 17–37.

[39] Trubetskoi, *Nasledie Chingiskhana*, p. 19.

popularity, came to occupy a central place in the Russian national consciousness" and that "these ideologies . . . were needed only to link an idea of the state, Mongolian in origin, to Orthodoxy, thereby making it Russian."[40] To reduce and oversimplify this model somewhat: in articulation of theory, Muscovy was Byzantine; in administrative practice, Mongol. I have found this model helpful in understanding much that otherwise is murky about Muscovy, but I am the first to admit that this model is not sufficient by itself to explain the dynamics of Muscovite society adequately.

A fifth model that has been proposed to explain Muscovy uses Europe as an exemplar. A practitioner of this model is Alexander Yanov, who, in his book on autocracy, wrote: "If . . . Russia [of the sixteenth century] was indeed undergoing significant economic expansion, and in particular a building boom, the necessary preconditions which existed in every European country – such as a free labor market, significant free capital, and judicial protection of private property – must have been present there too."[41] The most influential western European model was supplied by Karl Marx with his stages of historical development of societies: tribal, slave, feudal, bourgeois, all based on nineteenth-century conceptions of western European history. How unsuccessful this model has been is particularly clear in the attempts to deny that Muscovy had slavery,[42] or in attempts to find that Muscovy had feudalism the same as in medieval western Europe.[43]

Thus, any variation between the Muscovite form of the institution or practice and its exemplar is dismissed as no more than a local corruption. These import/variant interpretations are slightly more helpful than concentrating solely on indigenous developments because we can at least begin to make structural-functional comparisons of Muscovite institutions and practices with those in other societies. But it can also be faulted as a uni-dimensional approach that all too easily degenerates into superficial schematizations. To be sure, there are those who would like to make sweeping generalizations about which governments were influenced by the Mongols and which were not. Such generalizations show an ignorance of both Muscovy and the Mongols. For example, Boleslaw Szczesniak, in referring to the Mongol hegemony in Rus', calls

[40] Trubetskoi, *Nasledie Chingiskhana*, p. 20.

[41] Alexander Yanov, *The Origins of Autocracy: Ivan the Terrible in Russian History*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1981, p. 4.

[42] For a discussion of this problem, see Richard Hellie, "Recent Soviet Historiography on Medieval and Early Modern Russian Slavery," *Russian Review*, vol. 35, 1976, pp. 1–32.

[43] I discuss this problem in my article "The Military Land Grant Along the Muslim–Christian Frontier," *Russian History*, vol. 19, 1992, pp. 337–343, "Errata," *Russian History*, vol. 21, 1994, pp. 249–250.

it "this sad chapter of history," "this period of national humiliation," "the greatest calamity for the Rus' lands," and "one of the greatest historical evils." Furthermore, he asserts that the "devious traditions" of Mongol rule, which were "embodied in the Muscovite state, are visible even today." Finally, he breathes a sigh of relief that Belarus, Lithuania, and Ukraine were spared "the evil forces created by the Tartar Yoke."[44] After reading such assertions, one finds oneself agreeing more and more with Alan Fisher's assessment: "we still are without sophisticated analyses of the origins of Russian institutions."[45]

One of the problems with the acceptance of the view that the Mongols may have made a positive contribution to Muscovite political culture is the idea that a "pro-Mongol" evaluation must imply an anti-Russian attitude. Richard Pipes pointed out that "[t]he subject of Mongol influence is a very sensitive one for Russians, who are quick to take offence at the suggestion that their cultural heritage has been shaped in any way by the orient, and especially by the oriental power best remembered for its appalling atrocities and the destruction of great centres of civilization."[46] In the Soviet Union, those who attempted to suggest that the Mongol influence may have had some positive results were accused of "idealization of the history of the Turco-Mongol nomads," with the implication they were motivated by nationalist considerations as a result of paying insufficient attention to Marxism.[47]

Over thirty years ago, a telling exchange occurred in the pages of *Slavic Review* among Karl A. Wittfogel, Bertold Spuler, and Nicholas Riasanovsky.[48] Both Wittfogel and Spuler argued in favor of seeing positive Mongol influence on Muscovite and Russian institutional development. Spuler added that "discussion on this issue is today scarcely necessary any longer."[49] Yet, Riasanovsky's position on Mongol

[44] Boleslaw Szczesniak, "A Note on the Character of the Tatar Impact upon the Russian State and Church," *Études Slaves et Est-Européens*, vol. 17, 1972, pp. 92, 95, 97.

[45] Alan W. Fisher, "Muscovite–Ottoman Relations in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," *Humaniora Islamica*, vol. 1, 1973, p. 213 fn. 11.

[46] Pipes, *Russia Under the Old Regime*, p. 74.

[47] I. P. Petrushevskii, *Zemledelie i agrarnye otnosheniia v Irane XIII–XIV vekov*, Moscow and Leningrad, Akademiia nauk SSSR, 1960, p. 31 fn. 1; pp. 36–37. For a discussion of this point, see Bernard Lewis, "The Mongols, the Turks, and the Muslim Polity," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th ser., vol. 18, 1968, pp. 50–52; reprinted in Bernard Lewis, *Islam in History: Ideas, People, and Events in the Middle East*, 2nd edn., Chicago, Open Court, 1993, pp. 190–191.

[48] *Slavic Review*, vol. 22, 1963: Karl A. Wittfogel, "Russia and the East: a Comparison and Constrast," pp. 627–643; Nicholas Riasanovsky, "'Oriental Despotism' and Russia," pp. 644–649; Bertold Spuler, "Russia and Islam," pp. 650–655; and Karl A. Wittfogel, "Reply," pp. 656–662; reprinted in *The Development of the USSR: an Exchange of Views*, ed. Donald W. Treadgold, Seattle, University of Washington Press, 1964, pp. 323–358.

[49] Spuler, "Russia and Islam," p. 650; *Development*, p. 346.

influence is most clearly represented by his statement: "aspirin is not borrowed from a headache."[50] Riasanovsky was referring here specifically to the fortifications built to repel Tatar intrusions of the sixteenth century, but I think it a not unfair characterization of Riasanovsky's general view on Mongol influence. In response, Wittfogel accused Riasanovsky of a "self-imposed conceptual blackout" that prevented him from seeing the overwhelming influence of the Mongols.[51]

We can explain the vehement difference in opinions, at least partially, by differing perceptual positions. Scholars who deny or minimize outside influence tend to be specialists in Muscovite and Russian studies. Those who see only outside influence tend to be specialists in other historical areas. Likewise, when viewing Muscovy from the inside, one tends to see almost exclusively Muscovite developments; when viewing it from the outside, one tends to see almost exclusively foreign influences. Muscovite political culture thus appears to be both exclusively indigenous and exclusively influenced by outside societies simultaneously, depending upon which frame of reference one is using at the time. Like Schrödinger's Cat, it is in both states of being at the same time until the historian "opens the box" (i.e. makes an arbitrary decision). Benedetto Croce has argued that history is not history until the historian thinks it and remains history only as long as the historian continues to think it.[52] So, too, as each historian thinks it in turn, Muscovy becomes both free from outside influence and influenced from the outside – two states of being at once. The idea is to break down the either/or bifurcation in order to see it as a both/and unity. We can achieve fuller understanding by being aware and having an appreciation of external influences when we focus on internal developments and by being aware and having an appreciation of internal developments when we focus on outside influences. Thus far, however, nationalist intransigence, historical chauvinism, and ideological prefigurations have blocked any attempt at constituting a unified model.

If there had been no Byzantium or Qipchaq Khanate, we might be led to postulate "action at a distance" in relation to influence from western Europe, that is, parallel institutional structures and functions with no direct connections discernible. Although we cannot eliminate western Europe as a possible influence, we can find more direct connections with Byzantium, via the Rus' metropolitans' coming from Constantinople until the mid-fifteenth century, and the Qipchaq Khanate, via the grand princes' frequent trips to Sarai during the fourteenth century. We

[50] Riasanovsky, "'Oriental Despotism' and Russia," p. 646; *Development*, p. 342.
[51] Wittfogel, "Reply," p. 662; *Development*, p. 358.
[52] Benedetto Croce, *Teoria e storia della storiografia*, Bari, Laterza, 1917, p. 5.